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Multi-fetal Gestation

**Definition/
cut-off value** More than one (>1) fetus in a current pregnancy (Pregnant Women) or the most recent pregnancy (Breastfeeding and Non-Breastfeeding Women).

Participant category and priority level	Category	Priority
	Pregnant Women	I
	Breastfeeding Women	I
	Non-Breastfeeding Women	III, IV, V, or VI

Justification Multi-fetal gestations are associated with low birth weight, fetal growth restriction, placental and cord abnormalities, preeclampsia, anemia, shorter gestation and an increased risk of infant mortality. Twin births account for 16% of all low birth weight infants. The risk of pregnancy complications is greater in women carrying twins and increases markedly as the number of fetuses increases. (1, 2)

For twin gestations, the 2009 IOM recommendations provide provisional guidelines: normal weight women should gain 37-54 pounds; overweight women, 31-50 pounds; and obese women, 25-42 pounds (3). There was insufficient information for the IOM committee to develop even provisional guidelines for underweight women with multiple fetuses. A consistent rate of weight gain is advisable. A gain of 1.5 pounds per week during the second and third trimesters has been associated with a reduced risk of preterm and low-birth weight delivery in twin pregnancy (2). In triplet pregnancies the overall gain should be around 50 pounds with a steady rate of gain of approximately 1.5 pounds per week throughout the pregnancy (2). Education by the WIC nutritionist should address a steady rate of weight gain that is higher than for singleton pregnancies.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women with twins have greater requirements for all nutrients than women with only one infant. Postpartum, non-breastfeeding women delivering twins are at greater nutritional risk than similar women delivering only one infant. All three groups of women would benefit greatly from the nutritional supplementation provided by the WIC Program.

- References**
1. Brown JE and Carlson M. Nutrition and multifetal pregnancy. J Am Diet Assoc. 2000;100:343-348.
 2. Institute of Medicine. WIC nutrition risk criteria: a scientific assessment. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.; 1996.
 3. Institute of Medicine. Weight gain during pregnancy: reexamining the guidelines (Prepublication Copy). National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.; 2009. www.nap.edu. Accessed June 2009.
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Additional Related References

1. Brown JE, Schloesser PT. Pregnancy weight status, prenatal weight gain, and the outcome of term twin gestation. *Am.J.Obstet.Gynecol.* 1990;162:182-6.
 2. Suitor CW, editor. Maternal weight gain: a report of an expert work group. Arlington, Virginia: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health; 1997. Sponsored by Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
 3. Williams RL, Creasy RK, Cunningham GC, Hawes WE, Norris FD, Tashiro M. Fetal growth and perinatal viability in California. *Obstet.Gynecol.* 1982;59:624-32.
 4. Worthington-Roberts, BS. Weight gain patterns in twin pregnancies with desirable outcomes. *Clin.Nutr.* 1988;7:191-6.
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